

Contracting Opportunity

The Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Office of Personnel Security & Suitability (PSS) is seeking qualified U.S. citizen to conduct background investigations as an independent contract special investigator. Contract investigators conduct interviews and review records to gather relevant information about a person's background. PSS uses this information to determine a person's eligibility for access to classified national security information and suitability for employment by the Department, or other federal agencies.

Contract special investigators must:

1. Be a U.S. Citizen;
2. Be eligible for a top secret security clearance;
3. Hold a bachelors degree from an accredited college or university (although exceptions may be made on a case by case basis depending on the candidate's experience or training);
4. Have the ability to work independently and meet strict deadlines;
5. Have the ability to collect information through interviews and review of documents;
6. Have the ability to report findings thoroughly and clearly, both orally and in written form;
7. Have skills sufficient to receive assignments and report findings via computer.

Successful candidates will be issued a Blanket Purchase Agreement (BPA) by PSS and report to the RSO. When services are required, the contract special investigator will be assigned work by, and submit reports to, the RSO. Contract investigators are compensated based on a point system in which points are assigned to various investigative activities, with a fixed payment per point. Upon completion of assigned work, contract investigators submit an invoice to the RSO for certification and forwarding to PSS for payment. While PSS or RSO is not obligated to purchase any minimum amount of services under the BPA, we anticipate contract investigators working overseas may earn an average of approximately \$40,000 per year, or more depending on the level of effort and volume of work assigned by the RSO.

As independent contractors, contract investigators work from home and connect to the PSS Report Management System via a secure internet connection using their own Internet Service Provider (ISP). While PSS will issue identification credentials, contract investigators must provide their own transportation and other equipment such as a computer, telephone, ISP, fax and light duty shredder required to deliver products under the terms of the BPA. A complete copy of the Statement of Work, as well as some frequently asked questions, follow this announcement.

Interested, qualified candidates should submit a resume via e-mail to the RSO at:

DS_RSO_Vienna@state.gov.

STATEMENT OF WORK

SUPPORT SERVICES FOR CONDUCTING INVESTIGATIONS

I. OVERVIEW

- A. The Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), U.S. Department of State (DOS), is responsible for conducting background investigations on applicants for employment, incumbent employees and select contractors, as well as on behalf of other federal agencies.
- B. These investigations originate at DS headquarters and are supervised and approved by authorized personnel of the Office of Personnel Security & Suitability (PSS). Regional Security Officers (RSO) of overseas DOS missions are also authorized by PSS to supervise and approve investigations.
- C. DOS staffing is not sufficient to meet the Department's investigative responsibilities and, therefore, requires the DOS to utilize the services of independent contractors, herein referred to as "contract investigators", under individual Blanket Purchase Agreements (BPA).

II. GENERAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. Contract investigators are needed by DS to gather, sort, and process data required for assessments of the character, loyalty and reliability of applicants, employees and contractors.
- B. Contract investigators may be tasked to:
 - 1. Verify a person's statements of educational achievement;
 - 2. Verify the individual's claims of employment;
 - 3. Conduct interviews with the person, their references, developed references and former employers;
 - 4. Perform record checks;
 - 5. Prepare final reports on findings from the above activities;

III. FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

- A. Investigations – Contract investigators shall conduct background investigations using independent methods derived from previous experience and in strict accordance with procedures established by PSS to accomplish the following:
 - 1. Obtain data from appropriate official records and other documentary sources which contain personal data for confirming identity and history of the individual;

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2. Establish the continuity of the subject's claimed activities, account for the subject's changes in residence;
 3. Provide sufficient data to enable the DOS to establish the subject's loyalty to the United States, conduct a subject interview of the individual, conduct neighborhood inquiries, and search records of credit agencies, police and other law enforcement and regulatory agencies, and local, state and federal government agencies;
 4. Provide sufficient data to enable the DOS to establish the subject's general character, integrity, trustworthiness, and overall suitability for employment and/or access to classified information and;
 5. Verify the subject's education and employment.
- B.** Support – Contract investigators may support the Department's Personnel Security Program by assisting with case distribution and review of reports, as well as other assigned support services for PSS related to the program.

IV. DELIVERABLES

- A.** While the BPA is the contracting mechanism to allow the DOS to use contract investigators when needed, the BPA is not, in and of itself, a contract. Consequently, the DOS is not obligated to purchase any definite amount of services under the BPA, nor is the contract investigator obligated to perform services for the DOS.
- B.** When services are required by the DOS under the BPA, a Letter of Instruction (LOI) shall be issued by authorized PSS personnel to the contract investigator setting forth the work required and estimated cost. The LOI effectively establishes a contract between the DOS and the contract investigator to perform the specified work for the estimated cost. The DOS is not obligated to issue any definite number of LOIs to contract investigators. Contract investigators shall not perform any work for the DOS without a properly issued LOI.
- C.** Upon completion of the work set forth on the LOI, the contract investigator shall submit an invoice for services in the manner prescribed by PSS. No single invoice may exceed \$3,000.00.
- D.** Contract investigators shall complete all investigations and submit any required reports, in the required format, on or before the due date indicated by the assigning office. Failure to submit thorough reports in the prescribed format or failure to meet due dates may be cause for cancellation of a contract investigator's BPA.

V. PERSONNEL

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Contract investigators are contracted by the DOS on an individual basis. Though contract investigators may wish to be associated with a corporate entity for legal purposes, e.g. John Doe, dba Doe Investigations, Inc., all work associated with the contract may only be conducted by the individual with whom the DOS has executed the BPA. No other individuals within or outside a contract investigator's corporate entity may perform any work associated with the contract. This restriction includes such activities as typing reports by administrative personnel or a contract investigator's relative.

VI. EQUIPMENT

- A.** As independent contractors, contract investigators are responsible for providing the necessary equipment to conduct and report investigations according to prescribed PSS procedures and formats. Such equipment may include, but not necessarily be limited to, computers, printers, modems, network connections, facsimile devices, shredders, security containers, service providers, etc.
- B.** The DOS is not under any obligation to provide equipment for contract investigators to meet requirements for conducting or reporting investigations.
- C.** The DOS does not incur any liability, financial or otherwise, for equipment purchased or maintained by contract investigators.
- D.** In the event the DOS does issue equipment to contract investigators, such equipment remains the property of the DOS and shall be returned to the DOS immediately upon request by PSS.

VII. PROTECTION OF INFORMATION

- A.** Contract investigators shall not maintain, retain, or possess any investigative notes, recording or other storage media, documentation, or memoranda concerning any investigation beyond a period established by PSS.
- B.** Contract investigators shall take all reasonable precautions to protect all information concerning the subject of any investigation from unauthorized disclosures.
- C.** All notes, memoranda or any other substantive information associated with any investigation are the sole property of the DOS and shall be submitted to PSS upon request, or destroyed as directed.

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VIII. COMPENSATION AND TRAVEL

- A.** Compensation of contract investigators is based on a point system. The method of determining compensation due to investigators shall be made according to the following point system:
1. One point shall be paid for a source interview, or record check, conducted in person;
 2. One-half point shall be paid for any source interview, or record check, conducted by telephone;
 3. Three points shall be paid for conducting an interview of the subject of the investigation, commonly referred to as the Subject Interview;
 4. One point shall be paid if during the conduct of certain investigations, it is necessary for the investigator to personally meet with the subject, outside of the Subject Interview, to obtain information and/or sign release forms;
 5. One point shall be paid for file reviews or consultations requested by authorized PSS personnel prior to commencing the investigation. Should the file review or consultation become unduly time consuming, the investigator may claim additional points, but such claims will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis;
 6. One point will be paid for each forty-five miles of travel while conducting record reviews or interviews necessary to fulfill the requirements of an investigation.
 7. One-third of a point shall be paid for each page, or determined equivalent, of a Report of Investigation (ROI), or other required document typed in final format by the investigator; and
 8. Situations not covered by the above will be addressed, points assigned and approved by authorized personnel on a case-by-case basis.
 9. PSS will establish the rate of compensation for points to remain competitive with other entities performing similar work. PSS may amend this rate periodically when PSS determines such amendments are warranted by changes in the industry.

B. Travel

1. Contract investigators may be requested to assume worldwide travel to conduct investigations. While the DOS will pay per diem and travel expenses, it shall only do so on a reimbursable basis. Per diem rates and reimbursements shall be in accordance with applicable Federal Travel Regulations. Actual subsistence expenses may be authorized when:

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- a) There are unusual circumstances to travel; or
 - b) There is travel to designated high-rate geographical areas as provided for in DOS regulations.
 - 2. Determination of whether per diem or subsistence will be allowed is a prerogative of authorized PSS personnel. Travel arrangements shall be the responsibility of the contract investigator. Under no circumstances shall advances be made for travel.
 - 3. Use of government owned vehicles by contract investigators is prohibited.
 - 4. Contract investigators will be compensated for the use of privately owned vehicles at the prevailing government rate as established by the General Services Administration (GSA).
 - 5. Contract investigators shall be reimbursed for miscellaneous travel expenses connected with an investigation. Examples of such expenses are parking fees and highway toll costs.
- C. Contract investigators shall be paid by methods prescribed by PSS.

IX. AUDITS

PSS will periodically audit work performed by contract investigators on a random basis, for quality control purposes.

X. DURATION

This Statement of Work may be modified by PSS as needed. Any such modifications shall take effect when the contract investigator is issued a LOI subsequent to the effective date of the modification. Notice of modifications to this Statement of Work shall be distributed to contract investigators by methods prescribed by PSS.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q – What is the current payment per point?

A - \$44.50

Q – Will I receive the same benefits as a regular Department employee?

A – No, as an independent contractor, you do not receive benefits such as retirement, health insurance or leave, nor do you accumulate credit for federal service. The compensation rate provides sufficient funds to provide your own benefits if desired.

Q – Will the Department withhold taxes from my pay?

A – No, you are responsible for payment of your own taxes. Many contract investigators make regular tax payments to the IRS through Treasury's online Electronic Federal Tax Payment System.

Q – May I use mission resources such as office space, telephones and computers?

A – No, you must provide your own office space, phone and computer.

Q – May I use government owned vehicles provided by the mission?

A – No, contract investigators are prohibited from using government owned vehicles.

Q – Will I be reimbursed for travel expenses, including the use of a privately owned vehicle?

A – Yes, you will be reimbursed for travel in accordance with the Federal Travel Regulations and reimbursed for mileage associated with the use of a Privately Owned Vehicle at the prevailing GSA rate. Refer to www.gsa.gov for the current rate.

Q – Will I only be able to perform this work at my current location?

A – No, once you become a contract investigator, PSS will utilize your services on an as needed basis regardless of where you reside.

Q – What are the minimum computer requirements to perform this work?

A – A personal computer with Microsoft Windows XP operating system and a reliable, broadband internet connection.

Q – How will I receive work and submit reports?

A – All work is assigned and reported through PSS' proprietary, secure, web based Report Management System (RMS) using OpenNet Everywhere (ONE) from any personal computer with Windows XP and a broadband internet connection.

Q – How long has DS used contract investigators and how extensive is the program?

A – We've used contract investigators under a BPA since 1982. Today, we have approximately 820 investigators. Since 1991, our U.S. investigations have been exclusively conducted by contract investigators.